

Arts & Entertainment

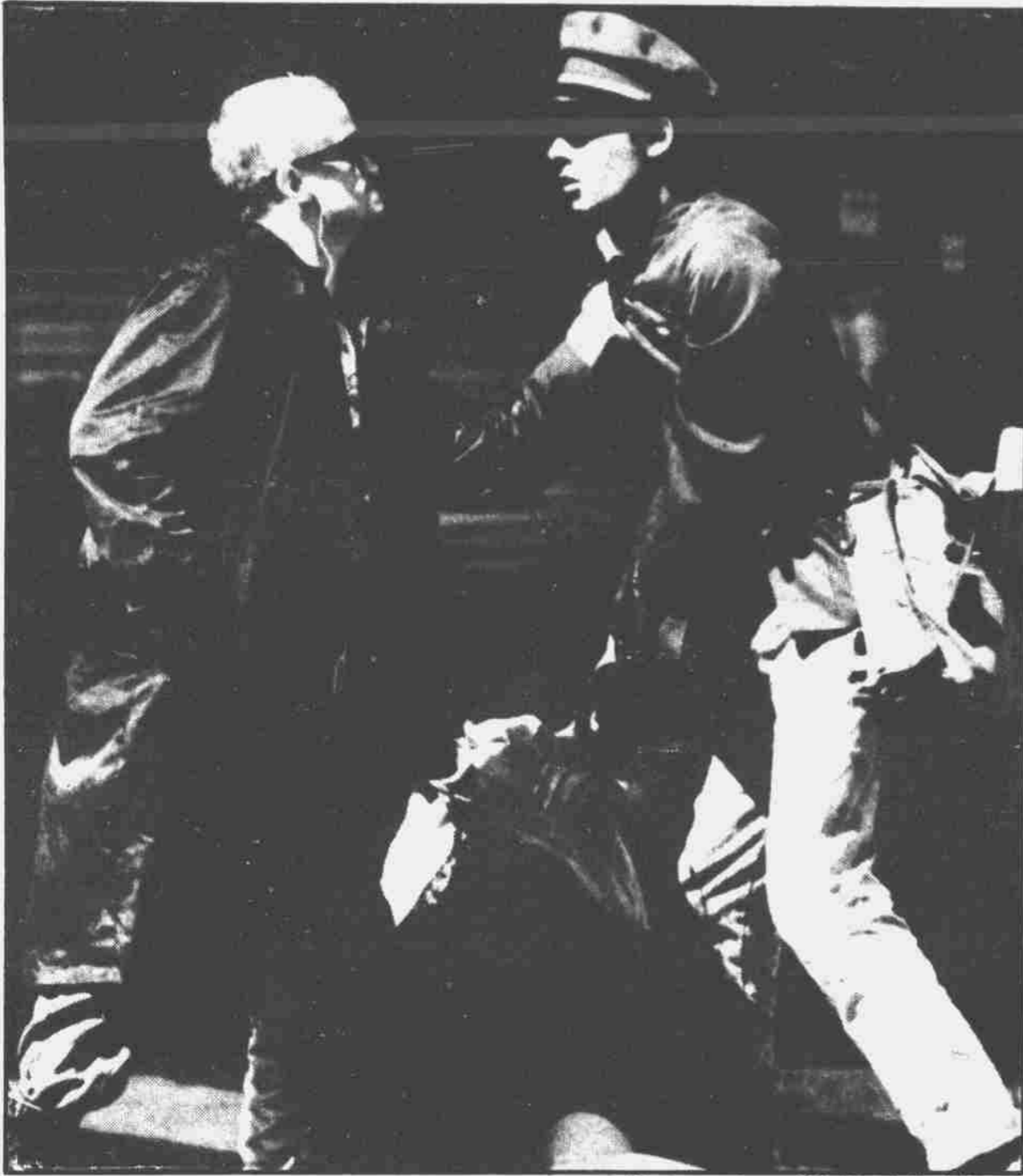


Photo courtesy of Sheldon Film Theatre

'Diva': Way of the camera

By David Thompson

The first shot in "Diva" is of a classical statue. The face looks into the camera with a marble dignity while waves of



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music wash by. The second shot is of a motorcycle helmet. Untainted art punctuated by plastic commercialism — that is the wit and charm of this eye-catching

film that opens at Sheldon Film Theatre tonight.

It is difficult to explain what saves this film from being knocked off as another high-gloss thriller. Since it opened in Paris in March 1981, it has been praised for its slick, lollipop surface, but there is more to it than that. True, we don't expect to find meaning — it would be like reading James Joyce in a disco — but when we do see something in there among all the neon lights, it seems special and is saved from being sentimental.

The film's surface was created by Jean-

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Youth: Shades of Jackson 5



Musical Youth
The Youth of Today
MCA

You can tell right away MCA counts on big things from Musical Youth. MCA has absolutely the worst album packag-



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ing in the business, but the cover and inner sleeves of the Musical Youths debut album, while still nothing elaborate, cost someone some money for a change.

That aside, Musical Youth still has a steep hill to climb for success in America, since the reggae music they play still is regarded as novelty. No true reggae artists have ever kicked up a storm on U.S.

radio. But then maybe these are the five kids who can do it.

Musical Youth consists of percussionist Dennis Seaton, 16; drummer Junior Waite, 15; bassist Patrick Waite, 14; keyboardist Michael Grant, 13; and guitarist Kelvin Grant, 11.

To make a long story short, you could just imagine the Jackson Five in their heyday singing reggae.

But that isn't a fair comparison since reggae by nature is more thoughtful and purposeful than anything the Jackson Five ever did, and Musical Youth is not merely kids doing reggae. Their music, solid and enjoyable throughout, stands on its own right.

Whatever the appeal, Musical Youth has been a hit in their hometown of Birmingham, England, since forming 2½ years ago. They would have started earlier except group member Junior Waite says, "We had to wait for Kelvin's fingers to get bigger so he could play the guitar."

Once that growth took place, the group, which then included Junior and Patrick Waite's father Freddie (who also wrote the original material for the band) was aired on a special radio program featuring demos from unknown artists. One of those who liked what he heard was MCA executive Charlie Ayre, who shortly after signing the band, replaced the senior Waite on stage with Seaton.

Musical Youth is far from a Black Uhura, as far as intelligence and intensity, but "The Youth of Today" is loaded with likable numbers, with messages mature and popular enough to appeal to your average soul and pop fan.

Ward Triplett

Go soak up some 'Cheers!'

By Chuck Jagoda

If you want to know the truth, dear reader, last Thursday night's "Cheers!" was too good to write about. Or at least to write during. I tried. I was sitting there, pen in hand, waiting for the first slack spot. There weren't any.

I managed to note the names of the writer and producers, but once the show



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itself started I couldn't take my eyes off it. I can't ever remember seeing a TV show so tightly written and directed. The acting wasn't exactly what you'd call embarrassing either.

Even the editing deserves an Emmy. The cuts contributed to viewer interest without calling attention to themselves. I only realized how good it all was when I noticed I was totally absorbed.

The show is a comedy of character and situation. This means that the characters have eccentric personalities and share a given situation — in this case, a Boston pub.

The owner-manager is a handsome ex-baseball pitcher. His ex-coach, named Coach, is the bartender. One waitress, Diane, is a former philosophy department teaching assistant who came to Cheers (the name of the bar) to meet her professor-lover and run off with him.

However, he decided to stay with his wife, and Diane decided to stay on as a bar waitress. She is witty and subtle.

Other characters patronize the bar, and no one patronizes the viewers of this show. The jokes and situations are clear and well constructed, and their writers aren't afraid to base their laughs on language and literature.

And how has the "vast wasteland" of TV produced such a pearl? Well you may ask. It seems to have at least something to do with production companies, programming theory and corporate politics, the three P's of commercial TV.

Grant Tinker, former chief of Mary Tyler Moore Enterprises during the company's production heyday, recently became president of NBC. One of his first executive decisions was to make his new network a home for "Taxi," after that warm, witty, verbal and successful comedy was dropped by ABC.

Tinker's next play was worthy of Evers and Chance. He followed classic programming strategy — but with a twist. Traditional strategy calls for pairing an already established show with a similar spin-off. The spin-off follows the established show in the evening's schedule and attracts a certain percentage of those already watching the first show. I call it the Established Lead-in to the New Spin-off Theory of Programming. I don't know what they call it in Hollywood.

In this case, the theory would call for "Cheers!" the new spin-off, to follow "Taxi," the established show. But Tinker tinkered and slotted "Cheers!" before "Taxi" — a sort of New Spin-off As Lead-in to the Established Theory.

Tinker deserves credit for creative programming. He also knew whom to hire. He hired his own. The producers of both shows are ex-writers and producers of the early MTM years. Thursday night, Sam Simon was the writer for "Cheers!" and also one of the producers of that evening's "Taxi."

The director of the "Taxi" episode was one of the partners of Burrows, Charles, Burrows, the "Cheers!" production company. Fellow MTM alumnus David Lloyd is executive script consultant to both shows.

Some people call this nepotism. Some call it corporate incest. I call it great television art.

'Shattered' needs Fixx-ing



Shattered Room
The Fixx
MCA

The problem with any type of music review is that not very many albums are totally good or bad in and of themselves.



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Such is the case with the "Shattered Room" album by the Fixx.

This band has jumped on the technorock bandwagon to some extent. Let's just say they're attempting to jump on the wagon. They haven't quite made it and are only hanging on by their fingernails. The five-member English group is obviously synthesized, though not as excessively as the Human League or Duran Duran.

The sound isn't unique to themselves and isn't so much different from many other bands today. It's just that the Fixx doesn't use the sound as well as the other bands. The main problem is that while the Fixx attempts to be another band of the '80s, they're not quite getting the job done. They've taken all of the ingredients

to be a good group in today's market, but forgot one.

The Fixx needs to find a direction and go for it.

While the band seems to dwell on the negative direction of the world, they leave out a clear-cut statement of solution to the problem. This is evidenced not in the music itself but by the lyrics of the songs. At best, the words are esoteric and filled with hidden meanings and double entendres.

On one song, the combination of exceptional music and avant-garde lyrics works very well.

"Stand Or Fall," the album's third cut on the first side, is by far the best track that "Shattered Room" has to offer. The haunting melodies and mysteriously apocalyptic lyrics make the song a 1982 version of the Doors' classic "Riders of the Storm." In the opening verse, the singer begins:

*Crying parents tell their children
If you survive don't do as we did
The son exclaims there'll be nothing to do too*

The daughter says she'll be dead with you

He continues with the chorus:

*Stand or fall
State your piece tonight
It's for your own fear
It's for your own fear*

This song is definitely a rose among thorns. It's great, but the rest of the album is pretty shaky.

A few reasons for buying the album remain. You can go out and buy "Shattered Room" if you have some money left over from buying all the good albums that are out. You can buy it and try to figure out the Fixx's message. Or you can look around through the import section of the store and try to find a "Stand Or Fall" EP.

The choice is yours. Be forewarned. "Shattered Room" by the Fixx is not for everyone.

Randy Wymore